

old
under
Wasatch
Steele's
Church
History

CHAPTER EIGHT

Faith of Our Fathers

A living faith—a faith that literally moved mountains of colonizing problems, mountains of tragedy, sorrow and hardship and yet brought with it mountains of joy—characterized the lives of pioneer settlers in Heber City and Wasatch County.

Theirs was a faith that had spurred them to move from other areas into this new frontier land where they had to wrestle with the soil and the elements for new homes, new farms and a new kind of life. It was a faith, also, that moved them to great spiritual works. They found no established meeting houses, well organized and conveniently operating, when they came. They had to build their own buildings, provide their own leadership and work hard to bring righteousness into their area. This they did, and did it with a determined faith that would not allow them to sacrifice the precious religious heritage that had brought them to this land and that sustained them each day of their lives.

The first group that was organized to come to the valley had an appointed religious leader, Elder William Meeks. All the settlers were Latter-day Saints, and they looked to their spiritual leaders for temporal guidance also.

When Elder Meeks left the valley, William Madison Wall became the area's presiding elder. He served until President Brigham Young ordained Joseph S. Murdock to be bishop of a new ward that was created in Heber City in 1861.

Abram Hatch succeeded Bishop Murdock in 1867 and he served until 1877 when he was called as the first president of the new Wasatch Stake. One of his first acts as stake president was to arrange a special conference at which the Heber Ward was divided into the Heber East and the Heber West Wards.

Main Street was declared the dividing line, and all those east of the street were naturally in the East Ward and those west of Main were in the West Ward.

Even though there were now two wards in Heber City, they continued for a time to hold a joint Sunday School. Sunday School services had been held since 1862 under the direction of Thomas H. Giles, the first Heber Ward superintendent. Others who served in that capacity were John Gallagher, Samuel Wing, Henry Clegg, Frederick Giles and William Lindsay.

The first meetings had been held in the log church and school building erected in 1860. A new stone building housed the Sunday Schools in

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1866 and finally by 1874 a Social Hall was used. Finally the Stake House was completed in 1887 and Sunday School meetings of the two wards were still held conjointly in the Stake House.

When the two wards were organized in 1877, Thomas Rasband was called to be bishop of the Heber East Ward. He chose John Muir and Harmon Cummings as his counselors. Bishop Rasband served until July 24, 1884, when an accident claimed his life. In the Heber West Ward, William Forman was sustained as the first bishop, with John Crook and George T. Giles as his counselors.

For some time after their organization the two wards continued to hold joint meetings. Sacrament meetings were held Sunday afternoons at 2 p.m. The two bishoprics, each in turn, took charge of the meetings. The large bell in the belfry of the stake house pealed out every Sabbath at 9:30 a.m. to remind the people of Sunday School and at 1:30 p.m. to remind them that Sacrament meeting was in half-an-hour.

Primary meetings were held in the back room of the Stake House on separate days for each ward. Relief Society meetings were also in the back room on Thursday afternoons. For some time, fast day was observed on the first Thursday of the month, and on this day the brethren would leave their work in the fields to join with the Relief Society sisters in the afternoon for a fast and testimony bearing meeting. Mutual Improvement Association meetings were originally held in the upper room of the old tithing office, and later in the stake house.

No exact information is available as to the year that the tithing office was built. However, it was in full operation by 1888 when James H. Moulton was appointed as Stake Tithing Clerk.

In the early days of the valley the tithing office was an important institution. Practically all of the tithing was paid by Church members in produce, and the office served as a central place for receiving and storing the goods.

The tithing office was built on the east side of Main Street at First North. The block on which the tithing office stood was also purchased by the church for other storage buildings. Sandstone was used to construct the tithing office, which was two stories high. There were two rooms on the ground floor, the main room on the west being used to transact business. The other main floor room was used as an office where groups could meet for any public, private or Church business. There was a large book cupboard in this room which served as a public library for some time. A set of encyclopedias donated to the community by James B. Wilson was the main attraction in the room.

On the second floor of the building there was a large meeting room used by many Church organizations. The basement was a large storage cellar and was divided into bins for potatoes and other vegetables.

North of the office building was a large two story granary. Each



The children of Joseph Stacy Murdock, first bishop of Heber City. Most of them spent their lives in Wasatch County. Seated, left to right, Ann Coleman; Margaret Murray, Ellen C. (Lottie) Wright, Jane Hylton. Back row, left to right, Parley A. Murdock, Andrew Murdock, Alva Murdock, William Murdock, David N. Murdock, John H. Murdock and Frank Murdock.

ing program for leadership. Those of experienced leadership quickly trained their counselors and local brethren and then were often called to other areas, leaving Church administration in the hands of those they had trained.

Bishop Murdock chose men of the area as his counselors. They were John W. Witt and Thomas Rasband with John Hamilton as ward clerk. In addition to presiding over Heber Ward, these men also directed Church affairs throughout the valley.

Under Bishop Murdock's direction, presiding elders were appointed in the communities that by this time were large enough to meet separately. John Harvey was named at Center Creek in 1861 and Sidney Epperson was called as presiding elder in 1862 for the upper Snake Creek settlement. In 1864 David Van Wagonen was sustained as presiding elder for the lower Snake Creek area and John Watkins of Midway was later appointed to preside in Charleston and traveled there to hold meetings on Sunday.

The calling of Bishop Murdock in Heber Ward lasted until 1867 when he was called by President Young to move to Southern Utah and attempt to raise cotton there. During his six years in Wasatch County he gained the love and respect of the people for his kindness and gener-

osity. He was also respected by the Indians because he had reared a young Indian girl and then later married her.

John W. Witt acted as bishop of the ward temporarily for several months and in December, 1867, President Young appointed Abram Hatch of Lehi, Utah County; as the new bishop of the ward.

Near Christmas time he left Utah County with his family and started for Heber and his new calling. It happened to be a very cold, rainy day and the canyon roads were bad, so William Averett, Robert Lindsay and Orson Hicken were dispatched to help the new bishop and his family make the journey.

His coming to the valley opened a new era in the lives of the people, for not only was Bishop Hatch an able Church administrator but he was also a man of sound business and financial judgment. Leaders called in the past had been particularly fitted for the pioneering work of the new area, but the community was established now and growing rapidly. The business experience of Bishop Hatch was to serve the people well during the 33 years he held positions of Church leadership in the area.

In addition to establishing a community store and strengthening the Church organization, Bishop Hatch encouraged the people to build better and more convenient homes and more adequate roads. He also played an important role in construction of a canal that benefitted the people of Heber and vicinity for many years.

During 1872 and 1873 Bishop Hatch directed the building of a social hall on main street. It was used for town meetings, Church services, dances and theatrical performances and served for many years.

Then in 1877 the area had grown sufficiently that the Church officials decided to organize a stake in the area. On July 14 and 15, 1877, Elders John Taylor and Franklin D. Richards of the Council of the Twelve Apostles came to Heber to effect the organization.

Bishop Hatch was called as the first stake president with Thomas H. Giles as first counselor and Henry S. Alexander, second counselor. Charles Shelton was sustained as stake clerk. High councilmen sustained were Joseph S. Murdock, John W. Witt, Isaac Baum, John Muir, James J. Howe, John McDonald, Gustavus Johnson, Henry McMullin, Sr., George W. Brown, Attewall Wootton, Sr., Henry Clegg and Daniel Bigelow.

At the same time Heber was divided into two wards with all those living east of Main Street included in the East Ward and all those west of Main Street in the West Ward. Thomas Rasband was ordained bishop of the East Ward with John Muir and Harmon Cummings as counselors and William Forman was chosen to head the West Ward with John Crook and George T. Giles as his counselors.

The stake, as organized, extended into Uintah County on the east, north into what is now Summit County and covered all of Wasatch

to the valley. It was small and threshed very slowly, using horses as its source of power. When the grain had been through the machine it still had to be run through a fanning mill to separate the kernels from the chaff. This mill was hand operated and also very slow. As a result, some of the grain did not get harvested before winter set in.

The prospects of winter seemed less bleak that year for there were many more people in the valley and more adequate preparations had been made. To help the time pass more quickly, a dramatics group was organized. Some very good plays were produced with John Crook, James Duke, C. N. Carroll, John Galligher and John Jordan taking the leads.

The saints also could look forward to regular Church services on Sundays in their new meeting house. A choir was organized to help with the music and John Crook, talented in many lines, served as the choir leader.



JOHN CROOK
Original Settler and Early Historian

Schools were also conducted during the winter months for the education of the people. John M. Young was the first school teacher and the classes were held in the meeting house with students sitting on rough benches or stools using make-shift desks fastened to the walls.

There were other interests in the new valley, too, for the records show that on Christmas Day, 1860, Charles C. Thomas claimed as his bride, Emmaline Sessions. They were married by Thomas Rasband in the first ceremony to be performed in the valley. That evening another couple, Harvey Meeks and a Miss Dougal were married at Center Creek by Silas Smith.

According to John Crook's journal, those who spent the winter of 1860-61 in the fort with their families were:

North Side: John Carlile, John Crook, Thomas Rasband, James Carlile, Fred Giles, Robert S. Duke, Willis Boren, James Davis, Robert Broadhead, Hyrum Oaks, Alfred Johnson, Sam Rooker, William Damaron, James Lamon and John Lee.

East Side: Alex Sessions, Richard Jones, Elisha Thomas, Bradford Sessions, Isaac Cummings, Darwin Walton, John Cummings Sr., Charles N. Carroll, George Damaron, Bailes Sprouse, Thomas Hicken, George Thompson and Norton Jacobs.

South Side: Thomas Moulton, Patrick Carroll, William Forman, John Muir, John M. Murdock, Thomas Todd, Cal Henry and Robert Carlile.

West Side: Jane Clotworthy, Zemira Palmer, James Duke, James Laird, Cub Johnson, John Davis, Robert Parker, Terry Burns, William McDonald, John Hamilton, George W. Clyde, John Witt, Joseph S. McDonald, John Jordan, a Mr. Russell and John McDonald.

By the time Spring was welcomed in 1861 the community of Heber was recognized by Church leaders in Salt Lake City as being large enough to organize into a ward. Thus, early in 1861 Joseph S. Murdock was ordained as bishop of the new ward by President Brigham Young and sent from American Fork to Heber to take charge of Church affairs. He chose as his counselors John W. Witt and Thomas Rasband. John Hamilton served as ward clerk.

Bishop Murdock also served as presiding bishop of the valley and directed the Church efforts of presiding elders who were called in the small communities that had begun to spring up in the valley. These community developments are discussed separately in later chapters.

The year 1861 proved to be a year of many significant accomplishments. With Church activity on an organized basis and the individual homes as well fixed as possible for that time, the settlers began to look to community improvements.

Provisions were made for old and new settlers to plant vegetable gardens outside the fort. Ephraim Smith and William P. Reynolds built a chopper run by horse power to chop wheat for those who could not go to the mills in Provo. While it was still somewhat crude, the chopper was a great help to those who had been grinding their flour in small hand mills.

Another bridge was built over the Provo River, this one located six miles north of Heber on the road to Salt Lake City. A good wagon road was also made through Provo Canyon, with toll being charged for use of the road.

John M. Murdock organized a cooperative sheep herd in 1860 and cared for the sheep during the summer months himself. He was able to take the sheep far enough south to winter out so that they did not need special supplies of hay. This method of caring for the sheep enabled

...And They Grew and Waxed Strong

When the earth awakens to the call of Spring there is a new breath of life in the air. Trees and plants don colorful new wardrobes and men lift up their heads with fresh courage to face life.

Such was the case in Provo Valley as Spring came in 1860. Those who had endured their first winter in the valley eagerly set out to plant new crops, improve their log homes and visit once again in the lower valleys.

As better weather came, so also did an influx of new settlers. News that grain crops had matured encouraged many to come, and others were anxious to secure homes and water rights while good land was still available. They came for many reasons, but each possessed a pioneering spirit and each heart burned with the desire to carve from the earth a piece of freedom—freedom from want and freedom to worship God.

Before the original group left Provo City in 1859 they had appointed William Meeks as their leader. He never established a home in the valley and so early in the Spring of 1860 William Madison Wall was appointed as presiding elder in the valley. He chose as his counselors John M. Murdock and James Laird. Since all those in the valley were Latter-day Saints they looked to their Church leaders as legislative and judicial officials also.

As summer came in June of 1860 there were more than 200 people living and working in the new valley. The greater part of what was called the "North Field" was put into cultivation and good crops were raised.

Early in July the people began talking about celebrating July 24th in commemoration of the pioneer's entry into Great Salt Lake Valley 13 years previously.

Some suggested that a bowery should be built in which to hold a celebration. However, John M. Murdock, counselor to Elder Wall, said that with just a little more effort a meeting house could be built. This structure would serve not only as a Church but also as a school building, a dance hall, a theatre and for all kinds of community gatherings.

The idea won immediate approval and everyone began to work with vigor on the project. Logs were brought from the hills and stone was quarried for the fireplaces and chimneys. Through the enthusiasm of the people the building was completed on time and used in the "Pioneer Day" celebration.

The structure was erected inside the fort string of houses and was 20x40 feet in size. A large open fireplace and chimney was built in each end, large enough to take logs of wood three to four feet long. It was the assignment of the Deacons to keep logs on the fire. Families took turns making and furnishing candles for the meetings.

Even though the building was built of logs and had only a dirt floor and hand-hewn furniture, the people rejoiced for it and gave thanks for its protection and its purpose whenever they met within its walls.

As the little settlement sank its roots deeper into the Wasatch soil the need for a permanent name became apparent. Out of this need grew the name Heber City.

According to the journal of John Crook nearly all the early pioneers of Provo Valley had been converted to the gospel in Great Britain. Since Heber C. Kimball, beloved counselor to President Brigham Young, had been in charge of the first group of missionaries to the British Isles, there was popular acclaim to name the town after him.

When he learned of the decision to name the new community after him, President Kimball came to the town and met with the people. In his remarks he is reported to have said:

"Now you people have named your little town after me. I want you to see to it that you are honest, upright citizens and good Latter-day Saints that I may not have cause to be ashamed of you."